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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 007155

SIPDIS

NSC STAFF FOR POUNDS

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON EGYPTIAN INTERIOR MINISTER
ADLY

Classified by DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) In his September 12 introductory call on Egyptian Interior Minister General Habib el-Adly, the Ambassador expressed enthusiasm for the strong working-level cooperation between various USG agencies and the MOI. The Ambassador congratulated the Minister on the success of GOE security forces in protecting the September 7 elections and averting any serious incidents. Adly expressed concern that the upcoming parliamentary elections, which have historically been difficult to secure, will pose greater challenges. The Ambassador underlined the extent of U.S. and international interest in the upcoming parliamentary elections and proposed that the GOE consider relocating those polling places currently in police stations to more neutral venues. Adly agreed, and suggested that he would lobby for it. Some are speculating that Adly, who has had several serious terrorist incidents occur on his watch in the past year, could lose his seat should Mubarak shuffle his cabinet after his inauguration on September 27. End summary.

Building on Strong Cooperation

2. (C) The Ambassador paid his first call on Egyptian Interior Minister General Habib el-Adly on September 12. The Ambassador introduced country team members who work closely with the Ministry on various security-related issues. Acting Legal Attache and DEA Country Attache each thanked Adly for the strong cooperation they enjoy with their MOI counterparts handling criminal and terrorism investigations and narcotics enforcement matters. The Ambassador also noted that the Embassy's Consular Section works very closely with MOI, particularly on sensitive and sometimes tragic issues such as international parental abduction.

3. (C) Introducing the newly arrived RSO, the Ambassador thanked Interior Minister Adly in particular for the considerable resources the GOE devotes to protecting USG personnel and facilities in Egypt. Adly said he was firmly committed to protecting U.S. interests in Egypt and was a strong supporter of MOI's close working-level cooperation with the USG. The Minister agreed with the Ambassador that both sides should seize opportunities to build on this already strong cooperation. (Note: Some are speculating that Adly, who has had several serious terrorist incidents occur on his watch in the past year, could lose his seat should Mubarak shuffle his cabinet after his inauguration on September 27. End note.)

Elections Security Hurdle Passed...

4. (C) The Ambassador congratulated the Minister on the management of security for the September 7 presidential election. Contrary to some dire predictions, there was no serious violence either during the campaign or on election day. By and large, security forces acted with restraint and impartiality, reflecting credit on both the Ministry of Interior and on Egypt as a whole, the Ambassador noted.

5. (C) Thanking the Ambassador for these comments, Adly lamented that the security forces are often scape-goated when incidents occur and opined that securing the presidential elections had posed a daunting challenge. He asserted that police had acted with significant self-discipline and restraint on numerous occasions in recent weeks, when "bad elements" affiliated with the opposition had tried their best to provoke them.

...But Parliamentary Polls Present New Challenges

6. (C) Continuing, Adly admitted he was worried about the coming parliamentary elections, expected in three stages in November (dates TBA). The parliamentary elections often

involve fierce local rivalries and have historically been difficult to secure, with clashes and even exchanges of gunfire and acts of arson not unheard of in the past. The Ambassador told the Minister that the international community would be closely focused on the coming parliamentary elections and wished Egypt every success in conducting a process that was not only secure, but fair and transparent.

One Way to Improve the Process

17. (C) The Ambassador flagged for Adly one of the observations made by the assessment teams deployed by the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute to watch the September 7 presidential elections. Members of both teams noted that a number of polling places across Egypt were located in police stations. The Ambassador explained that, in the view of international elections experts, police stations do not make good polling places because voters may associate them with the regime and be afraid to vote against the government.

18. (C) Adly noted that the selection of venues for polling places was a perennial problem for the GOE, as many districts lacked suitable public facilities. Nonetheless, Adly continued, he agreed that police stations were not an ideal choice and said he would recommend that other venues be found, though he implied that he did not have final say in the matter.

Comment

19. (C) Technically, it will fall to the still unconstituted parliamentary elections commission to identify venues for polling places, but MOI, which has administered all previous elections and which continues to supply manpower and administrative support, will clearly have a say. While the GOE may find it difficult to relocate those polling places currently in police stations, enlisting the Minister's support on this issue is a step forward. End comment.

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